

AUTHORITY/RESPONSIBILITY

by David Mulvey, Programs Director

One of the topics Bob Monroe often addresses during his evening conversations with participants at the *GATEWAY VOYAGE*® is authority/ responsibility. Bob suggests that one measure of progress along the path to adulthood is an individual's willingness to assume authority and accept responsibility for his or her actions. It sounds very simple—and on the surface, it is. As a guide for learning to live a self-motivated life, as a tool for noticing how we create our own reality, this basic concept of cause (authority) and effect (responsibility) is a powerful force in our lives.

Until we become aware of this concept (and let's face it, even long after), we often assign our authority to others: parents, schools, religions, governments, bosses, friends, lovers, etc. But as we become aware, we usually begin to notice authority/responsibility working in our lives.

However, many of us who are determined to make personal growth and self-awareness cornerstones of this physical life often fall into the pattern I call "New Age Guilt." Accepting the principle of cause and effect, we blame ourselves for disharmony in our lives and embrace the effect side of the equation, "I know, or at least believe, that I create my own reality... My life is terrible... Therefore, I'm doing a lousy job," or "I know health, happiness, prosperity, love, are readily available... I haven't manifested those elements in my life... I'm doing something wrong," or simply "It ain't nobody's fault but my own." While it's important to recognize our responsibility for our own lives, we usually dwell on the "fault"; we blame ourselves (most of us have been trained that way) but it gets us nowhere. In many such cases, we put the cart of responsibility before the horse of authority. We assume responsibility includes guilt, and we take guilt on without taking the more important step of examining how to use personal authority. We can learn how to use this authority and become pro-active creators, rather than re-active "victims" of our own causes.

If you accept the premise that we are more than our physical bodies, then you recognize at least the possibility of a nonphysical portion of self. If you choose, you can take the premise a step further and assume that our nonphysical self is a partner (some would say it's more like the majority shareholder) in our lives. In this culture, it's likely that most of our learning and experience has not taken this other part of ourselves into account. Yet many would agree that our true authority, our ability to be the cause in our lives, flows from the nonphysical self, while the physical self experiences the effect. If we build our skills in creating the cause, the effect is something we can enjoy, rather than suffer through. "Creating the cause" implies action. If we "act right," then we realize "good" effects.

But I suggest there's a step beyond "acting right," which is "thinking right." When pressed to boil down into a simple statement the many reasons we may have for choosing to participate in physical life, Bob Monroe has said, "To learn, in a slow-motion format, that thought equals action."

Throughout many disciplines, we hear such phrases as "Thinking makes it so," or "Act as if.... The power of thought can (and does) affect our lives right now! If you get a telegram from the attorney of your long-lost Aunt Martha, stating that you will inherit her entire estate of over five million dollars as of January 1, 1991, will you wait until the new year before you begin thinking like a millionaire? Will you wait until then to be elated? I imagine your attitudes, your outlook, perhaps even your physical health will be drastically changed right away. Yet your bank balance is the same, nothing has really changed except your thought, which changes your actions, which changes your effects. The mental equivalent of being a millionaire is in place now, and you are experiencing the results now. Note that this thought or attitude also contains emotional components that make it all the more powerful.

By inviting such attitudes into our lives, by "acting as if... right now, we are automatically eliminating room for undesirable thoughts and, thereby, undesirable effects. It's a simple question of time management. In his bestseller on America's best-run companies, *In Search of Excellence*, management consultant Tom Peters discusses a similar process. In getting the best performance from its employees, the excellent firms recognize that negative reinforcement can produce behavioral change (effects), but often in unpredictable and undesirable ways. Conversely, they recognize that positive reinforcement "... *nudges good things onto the agenda instead of ripping things off the agenda*... positively reinforced behavior slowly comes to occupy a larger and larger share of time and attention. By definition, [the] less desirable begins to drop off the agenda." So "thinking right" becomes a pro-active creative process by both encouraging desirable effects and by eliminating possibilities of less desirable effects.

Please understand that I'm not advocating the repression of blocks, doubts, and fears. In fact, as small doubts and fears are "nudged off the agenda," we are sooner or later going to encounter our core issues—the basics of "I can't," "I'm not worthy," "I'm not OK" we learned in childhood, when we exercised virtually no authority. That's great! As such issues come up, we can expand the process of authoritatively re-creating our agenda by dealing with them. Methods and techniques for doing this are varied and plentiful, too much so to delve into here.

But if we've been step-by-step, moment-by-moment, thought-by-thought actively filling up a positive agenda that matches our desires, dealing with these core issues will likely be an easier and less painful process than it might have been otherwise (if they had even surfaced at all!).

I see the ultimate power behind all of this as energy, which flows from nonphysical to physical and back again. Like fire, energy is neutral—it can be used to create or destroy. Thought is the conduit through which the energy flows, and thought determines the manner in which the energy is manifested. From this perspective, it's not a question of whether energy flows through us, but whether we choose to assume conscious control (authority) for how that energy is used.

So if we eagerly and joyfully assume authority for our lives right now, we can also accept our responsibility with eagerness and joy. May all your effects be “good” ones.

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